

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Repeal of the Tenure-of-Office Law.

From the N. Y. World.

We suppose there is little reason to doubt that the bill repealing the Tenure-of-Office act will pass the Senate, as it has the House. The repeal will be generally approved by the people, who, knowing that the public service is revoltingly corrupt, desire that General Grant should be deprived of every excuse for failing to reform it. As between the resolutely Republican officials who now hold places and any possible use the new President may make of his power, the people do not hesitate a moment to prefer the arbitrary will of the latter. We are willing to concede that the power of removal for merely political reasons, or removal without reasons, is subject to great abuse, and that it has been greatly abused. But the experiment of a different system, proceeding from the motives it did, and attended by the results it has, has pretty much discouraged any expectation of benefits from giving a greater fixity to the tenure of office. What our fate might have attended Mr. Jencks' bill under more favorable circumstances, there is no chance of a fixed tenure, with a continuous and roundabout method of removal, has poured odium upon what might, perhaps, have been a promising reform. We have found that officers are more likely to fall in integrity than in capacity; and that dishonesty is infinitely the greater evil of the two. The duties of most administrative offices are very simple. Our whole history hardly furnishes a memorable example of any great detriment to the public interests by the ignorance or incapacity of merely ministerial officers. The chief evils to be guarded against are frauds, defalcations, bribery, collisions between officers of the revenue and those who ought to pay it. These evils have grown to such a height under a fixed tenure, that everybody feels that the great urgency at present is not to keep men in office, but to turn them out. Honesty is a thing that can be tested only by a trial. Knaves are often so crafty, so subtle, they so habitually cover their tracks and conceal the evidence of their crimes, that they may remain long in office without any tangible evidence of their guilt. They may be suspected, and yet there may not be against them a scintilla of proof which might not be consistent with innocence, although it raised suspicions of their guilt. If the President has the power of prompt removal without any necessity of giving reasons, or any liability to review, he can clear out all suspected persons at once, without injuring their reputation if innocent, or waiting for complete evidence if they are guilty. The real motive for removal might do great injustice if the President were compelled to disclose it; but if he can remove without assigning any reason, as this practice is habitual, no wrong can be done, for no man's honesty is impeached. If there is tangible evidence of malversation, the officer should be prosecuted after his removal and made to suffer the legal punishment; but when a man is merely removed, he should be deemed innocent until he is proved guilty. This constant liability to removal cuts off all possibility of a cheating defense when there is guilt which the evidence does not reach, and it invigorates efficiency and fidelity. Such a power is indeed liable to great abuse, but the abuses are as nothing compared with the wide-spread rottenness which has grown up under the opposite system. When, as may often happen, the President and Senate are of different politics, the evils of a fixed tenure become stupendous. Each branch of the appointing power wishes to keep its own partisans in office, and knaves are furnished with the ready defense of saying that charges against their character are invented by political hostility. The effect is to transfer the responsibility of malversation to abolish official responsibility altogether, and leave no resource against official corruption but the slow, tedious, cumbersome forms of a legal prosecution, where a flaw in the indictment, or evidence morally conclusive but legally inadmissible, or the slackness or connivance of prosecuting officers, may enable a scoundrel to go scot free. This is surely a bad system: it is not easy to imagine anything worse. It has brought about such a state of things that, if General Grant shall be honest, efficient, and resolute in using the power about to be restored to the president, it will be a long time before any scheme for giving a fixed tenure of office can even gain a hearing.

The Shadow of Coming Events—Grant and Congress.

From the N. Y. Herald.

The Vicksburg campaign gave birth to a new popular leader; for it brought into prominent notice the commander of the Federal forces to whom had been entrusted the task of capturing the key point of the Rebel line of defense, Vicksburg. In the face of all military counsel, General Grant staked his future upon the success of a movement whose very boldness made it irresistible. He soon after repudiated the misfortunes of General Rosecrans and ordered the army of General Bragg. Everywhere infusing his indomitable yet mistaken zeal, he at once, and even upon the last field of battle, showed his appreciation of the problem of reconstruction by the liberal terms granted to the vanquished. He robbed no honors from those under him; he gave them their just share of praise, for they were of his own naming, and to have them do well was to reflect back upon him for his good judgment in their selection. The people tried him in the civil administration of the War Department, and the results were an immediate and immense reduction of its expenditures. Thus the man made his mark wherever he was placed. He did well, stamped his own character upon his work, and pleased us. For this we have elected him our President for the next four years. His capacity for war, upon which we have touched, is a quiet force, valuable for those persons to consider who do not feel disposed to accept certain results which have been reasoned into practical existence by the sabre. His generosity to the foe was the best proof that he understood that the South represented a vast and well-populated territory that it possessed a high-spirited and vigorous people, full of future power and wealth; that these facts must be recognized as a powerful existing force to be harmonized as rapidly as possible with the elements against which they had been clashing in a four years' desperate contest. His concessions to merit gave the people a proof that the cormorants who infest all public places would be forced from their prey; that men would be selected for

their fitness to fill the offices entrusted to them; that whispy things would be crushed out, railway and other jobs cease to plunder and sap the energies of the people; that in foreign countries we should no longer be represented by men who disgrace us, for through them we cause other nations to take us at the estimate which we place upon ourselves. His economy in the War Office showed his desire to reduce the burden of debt under which the nation is now staggering, and from which, if unrelieved, it will shake itself free by repudiation. It showed this in every department of government it was his desire to institute that military exactness of administration in public expenditure which is alone suited to a country at the moment it emerges from a great war covered with its attendant corruptions.

In union with Grant, the people considered that the reforms and policy here embodied were a necessity to the future well-being of the nation, and, looking for their best exponent, naturally elected as President the man who had proven himself, above all others, to be most fitted for the chief executive office of the Government.

Through General Grant Congress has immediately felt the strong hand of the people. The shadow they had been watching constantly increased in intensity. Congress has usurped a transient power in the struggle with an imbecile President, whom, by the Tenure-of-Office bill and other restrictions, they would up in a web from which, despite all effort, he could not break. Now, however, Congress bends to the irresistible mandate of the people, and restores the power named ourselves, by our Executive. By this it is proven that Grant, as a newly elected President, governs in all great issues from the day of his election. The forty-seven Representatives who cling to the past will be buried with it. The men who, headed by Butler, have the brains to measure the temper of the nation and accept its wishes as law, are opening the way to solid and beneficial legislation. Under the leadership of Grant and these men we expect a general restoration of our tottering fortunes; for we have a great destiny before us, whose mandate it is folly to disobey. We want legislation shaped to the fact that we are making ourselves, by our railway and telegraph systems, more compact as a nation than the State of Massachusetts was as a province in 1830. We want Congress to recognize that we face between six and seven hundred millions of people in Asia, and that there are thirty-five millions of people south of us calling upon us for commercial intercourse. On this continent we occupy the commercial centre of the world, and all maps now illustrative of the lines of trade place North America in the centre, with Europe and Asia on either hand.

With the inauguration of Grant must commence a new era of prosperity for the country. The influence which he, as the representative of the people, already throws over the times indicates the temper of the nation. Our civil war has not yet ended, nor will it end till the fourth day of next March. Then we may feel rest from the gigantic struggle of eight years. Then we shall launch a new commerce, stretch our iron arms towards the Pacific, rapidly shake off our national debt, and bury the petty memories of civil strife in the second chapter of our mighty civilization.

Amnesty and Suffrage.

From the Tribune.

The former ruling class of Virginia has steadfastly opposed negro suffrage. On New Year's Day this class, through representatives every way qualified, by ability, past services, high standing and hold upon the confidence of the community, to speak for it, decided to abandon the opposition. It made no hypocritical pretense of changed opinions; but, frankly avowing the continued belief that in their present condition the negroes are not safe depositaries of political power, bowed nevertheless to the verdict of the recent elections, in the hope that harmony might be restored on the basis of impartial suffrage and universal amnesty. Since their defeat the attitude of these men has seemed sullen and discontented, if not dangerous. They come now bearing the olive branch.

We are in favor of meeting them in the issue of peace. Where no danger is involved, we hold that an adjustment in a matter in which we have been so overwhelmingly victorious should be generous rather than higgling. We have no wish to see these leading men of their State constantly forced to content themselves in the light of victims of national wrath. Even if no higher motives controlled the Government, we should consider it shrewd policy now to alleviate the soreness of defeat. It is very true that we can reorganize without the disfranchised class, and can secure negro suffrage without it. But we doubt if any true friend to the negroes will longer urge disfranchisement for their sake. We profoundly distrust the view that negro suffrage secured by disfranchisement of a large part of the more intelligent population will conduce to permanent peace. We, in defiance of the old ruling classes, it won, in the revolutions of politics, be some day lost in their triumph. Won, by common consent, in a peaceful adjustment wherein each party gains something, it becomes a pledge of peace, and rests henceforth on the guarantee of the common faith and the common interest.

We hail, therefore, the evidence that the committee now urging on Congress on behalf of the old ruling class of that State the plan of impartial suffrage and universal amnesty is supported by the preponderance of intelligent public sentiment at home. As was to be expected, the movement is severely criticized in many and diverse quarters. The more bitter and malignant of the old Rebel class denounce it as the surrender of a vital principle. The new-comers who, with the negroes, give the main support to the present State Government denounce it as a new device of the old enemies, whom they hold a test of loyalty to fight forever and forever. But we believe it to be supported in good faith by a party capable of bringing to the polls a large majority of the Virginians who, through four years of deploring war, formed the main bulwark of the Rebel cause. We believe the return of these men to a hearty and active support of the State and National Governments a great gain to peace, to harmony, to the revival of industry and the return of a prosperous life in the civil administration of the War Department, and the results were an immediate and immense reduction of its expenditures. Thus the man made his mark wherever he was placed. He did well, stamped his own character upon his work, and pleased us. For this we have elected him our President for the next four years. His capacity for war, upon which we have touched, is a quiet force, valuable for those persons to consider who do not feel disposed to accept certain results which have been reasoned into practical existence by the sabre. His generosity to the foe was the best proof that he understood that the South represented a vast and well-populated territory that it possessed a high-spirited and vigorous people, full of future power and wealth; that these facts must be recognized as a powerful existing force to be harmonized as rapidly as possible with the elements against which they had been clashing in a four years' desperate contest. His concessions to merit gave the people a proof that the cormorants who infest all public places would be forced from their prey; that men would be selected for

The Debt and the Currency—Mr. Ewing's Letter.

From the N. Y. Times.

There is no absolute necessity, surely, for embarrassing the currency question with disputed points affecting the public debt. Mr. Ewing's letter is a masterpiece of diplomacy. He has stated with much cogency the case against immediate resumption, and Mr. Walker has done similar service in its favor, without raising the issue of good faith or repudiation in its bearing on the national bonds. Their examples were not needed to prove the possibility of discussing the desirability and feasibility of a return to specie payments, without reference to the claims of the bondholders; but they serve to render more conspicuous the mischievous tendency of the argument presented with so much ability

by Mr. Ewing. He makes the bond question an essential part of the currency question, and in good part rests his opposition to resumption upon the profit thence accruing to the bondholders. The combination is at once needless and injurious. It imports into the financial problem elements that have no proper place there, and throws over the whole the suspicion and uncertainty which are among the chief causes of embarrassment.

Mr. Ewing raises fresh the title of the holders of five-twenties to payment in coin. In his opinion, the title is invalid, and he employs a good deal of ingenious argument, and some obfuscation which is not ingenious, to show that they may be paid in greenbacks. He echoes President Johnson's warning against those who drive hard bargains, and predicts popular resistance to usury if the holders of the bonds press their interpretation of the contract. There may have been a pretext for this kind of talk while Mr. Seymour's pretensions to the Presidency were undecided. The good faith of the Government was one of the matters in controversy between the parties, and Mr. Ewing's argument would then have been in order. Now, it is a gratuitous attempt to excite distrust. The country has decided the dispute. The voice that assigned Grant to the Presidency decreed with equal distinctness the payment of the bondholders according to the spirit of the law. The considerations urged by Mr. Ewing were all before the people from the 4th of July to the 3d of November, and they rejected them as at variance with the honor and interest of the Republic. The construction he insists upon they rejected, and they declared instead that the Government shall discharge its obligations to the holders of its bonds in the currency of the world. This declaration, so recent and emphatic, should be accepted as conclusive. It is proof in advance that the doctrine of an "equitable adjustment," with which Cobett tickled the ignorance of an English multitude, will find no favor with the American people.

We do not, however, understand Mr. Ewing to contemplate the act which he attempts to justify. He denies the claim of the bondholders with a view to the completion of another bargain—not for the purpose of paying out greenbacks for five-twenties without more ado. His aim, in fact, seems to be akin to that of Mr. Sherman last year—namely, to compel the bondholders, by an appeal to their fears, to surrender their six per cent. security for a four per cent. which it is proposed to issue. Notwithstanding his own hostile exposition of the bondholders' title, Mr. Ewing is willing to waive the extreme position, and to compromise by a scheme of funding. He is willing to sully the national honor, and to repudiate the understood terms of a contract, for the sake of saving two per cent. per annum interest on the five-twenty bonds! We will not say that the saving would be inconsiderable. But it would be trifling in comparison with the damage done to the public credit, and the loss thus indirectly entailed on the business portion of the community.

The proposition is excused by Mr. Ewing on the ground that resumption must be preceded by funding. We believe that this is a reversal of the process that may best be employed—that funding will be impossible until resumption shall have been effected. This, however, is immaterial so far as Mr. Ewing is concerned. He holds, with Mr. Opdyke, that the country having adapted itself in a great degree to an inflated and irredeemable currency, need be in no hurry to return to specie payments. It can get on quite well without them, he thinks—at least for some time; and when that time expires the change to be effected will be comparatively small. There is, undoubtedly, much force in this version of the case. It is preferable to the plans proposed for funding by mere legislative enactment, as well as to plans for hastening resumption by merciless contraction. But if, as Mr. Ewing holds, immediate resumption is neither expedient nor possible, what conceivable reason is there for projecting a funding scheme as a preliminary to it, with repudiation as the foundation of the whole?

The truth is that, unsond as our present financial condition is, it may be borne still longer much better than the evils which a discussion shaped after the manner of Mr. Ewing would assuredly entail, or which would as certainly follow an attempt to legislate us back to a gold basis by any means yet prescribed in Congress. What is wanted is judicious preparation for resumption, leaving the realization of it contingent upon circumstances hereafter to be developed. And, meanwhile, it is above all things expedient to repress disputes involving the national faith, predicated upon demands which, as yet, have no actual existence.

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